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25X1 MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

FROM :

SUBJECT : Comments on Joint Counterinsurgency
Concept and Doctrinal Guidance (Joint
Chiefs Memorandum of 5 April)

1. We have several troubles with this paper, and a list of specifics appears below. Essentially, however, our principal source of concern stems from what seems to be one primary conceptual deficiency; namely a lack of precise and realistic analysis about what the counterinsurgency problem is and, equally important, what it is not. Putting it another way, this paper is on pretty solid ground and going in the right direction in most of its proposals for improving the techniques of US counterinsurgency efforts in cases where Communist-backed or led counterinsurgency is manifestly the problem; Laos and South Vietnam, of course, being the two examples. But in how many other situations does or will the guidance apply? And if it does not apply, there are dangers for the US in an unrealistic effort to make it apply.

2. This line of criticism is not intended to suggest that there are no other potential or incipient

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Communist-backed counterinsurgency situations around the world. Of course there are. But the plain truth is that there are many more situations where turmoil and even revolutionary violence, often but not invariably of a leftist nature, is probably in the cards for the future but which do not lend themselves to the school solutions advanced here.

3. A variety of governments, some of them pro-US, will confront such challenges, and decisions will accordingly have to be made by the US. Yet this document simply does not offer the kind of rigorous and precise thought and analysis about where real US interests lie, and what real US capabilities are or can be made to be which will be required if the US effort is to be directed in the right places and if waste or worse is to be avoided.

4. More specifically, this document, in our view, addresses itself too exclusively to the clear case/ where a government confronted with Communist-back insurgency calls for (or can be persuaded to accept) US assistance in suppressing the threat. In terms of US decisions to be made, these are the comparatively easy cases, and the various proposals for making our action more effective

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are probably all to the good in such cases (better

25X1 coordination, educational and training efforts on Communism and how to beat it, use of military personnel and resources in certain civic action programs, and all the rest of it.) So far so good.

5. But the hard truth is that most of the problems the US will face in this general regard are not nearly so clear-cut. They are far more likely to involve close and difficult decisions about dissident or revolutionary movements which may indeed be actual or potential cases of insurgency but which are something other than Communist-led; in many cases "wars of liberation" in Khrushchev's phrase, or simply factions of "outs" contending against the "ins" of the regime. The fact that the Bloc may support such movements, or that they are, more often than not, to the left of the incumbent government, should not thereby in all cases constitute a prima facie case for the US to oppose them by rallying to the support of the incumbent regime.

6. Yet by setting forth a number of principles derived from experience in Laos, or Vietnam, and extending these to apply across-the-board to counterinsurgency

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problems around the world, this document is too susceptible to interpretation as an exhortation to ~~the~~ active US counter-insurgency efforts, according to rather set formulae, in a variety of situations which are far more complex than suggested therein.

7. In many conceivable insurgency situations, it is doubtful that US interests would be best served by attempting to intervene -- even though friendly local officials were pressing hard for such a step. In certain others, it is doubtful that open US intervention would be effective, unless attempted on such a scale and nature as to make the costs, risks and disadvantages outweigh the possible benefits. And in still other cases, where the US might want to intervene and consider it worth the effort, the local government might not. These are the tough decisions, and it is, in our view, a deficiency of this paper that it pays insufficient attention to them.

8. Admittedly, this document is not a master plan for country-by-country policy or contingency planning, nor a recommendation that the US jump in with both feet in all possible situations. As a statement of doctrinal and conceptual guidance, however, it is certainly subject

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to something like this interpretation, and could lead its readers to a pretty unsophisticated approach to the complexities of foreseeable problems.

9. So much for comment on general concept and tone. The more specific criticisms which follow are, for the most, variations on the theme above:

(a) Pages 6 - 7.

Most of these sub-paragraphs make their case by exaggeration and to accept them as a fair statement of the problems we face is to invite pretty unsophisticated thinking or worse. For example, the Communists don't always, or even very often clandestinely block democratic reforms. They are not the only ones pressing for state-controlled economies. They do not go in for assassination this much. There are plenty of other types who oppose Western-aligned regional defense pacts, etc. This whole section stands as a gross oversimplification of the problem, an invitation to the already too prevalent mode of thinking that a wide variety of nationalist and neutralist elements, being in disagreement with the US in one respect or another, may or should be the targets of US counterinsurgency planning.

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(b) Page 10

It is comforting to see the paper acknowledge that the US is not the "guardian of the status quo" in an era when change is going to occur in much of the world whether the US opposes it or not. In many cases, however, it is questionable whether the US can -- or should try -- to be "custodian" of the development process. In many cases, the US is not in a position to exercise this kind of responsibility, certainly not through the use of the US military. Use of the phrase "custodian" implies that it is, and is simply an invitation to trouble and frustration in certain instances.

This caveat applies to the "national building" and "civic action" aspects of the paper generally, though of course the military may do good along these lines in certain cases, and other agencies in more cases. The point is, this kind of exercise is not, usually, an aspect of counterinsurgency and to think of it as such is to invite trouble in more cases than not.

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